



# News Release

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## **CALIFORNIA NUTRITION NETWORK CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF FIGHTING THE STATE'S "BATTLE OF THE BULGE"**

***Broad-Based California Nutrition Network Hopes to Accelerate Gains  
in Providing Wider Access to Fruits, Vegetables and Physical Activity***

SACRAMENTO— Celebrating the efforts of more than 160 agencies from Eureka to San Diego that support low-income Californians in adopting healthy eating and regular exercise, nutrition and physical activity leaders met today and strategized how to reduce obesity rates in California.

At the meeting, which was organized by the *California Nutrition Network for Healthy, Active Families (Network)*, participants discussed two key goals for 2010: doubling the percentage of adults who eat the recommended daily amount of five servings of fruits and vegetables to 70 percent; and doubling the percentage of adults who get 30 minutes or more of daily physical activity five or more days each week to 70 percent. In 2001, 34 percent of California adults achieved each of these goals.

To meet this challenge, state health officials met with more than 675 individuals to celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Network* and focus on ways to reach all Californians and educate them about the key ingredients to a healthy lifestyle that can help prompt social change and influence an overall healthier population.

"One of the *Network's* greatest achievements in its first 10 years has been its ability to raise awareness of the link between diet, physical activity and good health," said Kimberly Belshé, secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency. "With more Californians falling victim to the effects of obesity every day, it's critical that our next 10 years succeed in reducing obesity by giving Californians tools to help change the way they eat, play and live."

Obesity and overweight is a top public health concern, quality of life and economic problem in California. More than half of California adults are overweight or obese, and 38 percent of California children ages 9 to 11 are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight. Also, nearly 74 percent of youth are unfit, and only 40 percent of teens meet minimum daily targets for physical activity.

"Collectively, the state has gained 360 million pounds over the last decade," said Belshé. "If California is to begin losing these pounds, bold, decisive action is needed – by individuals and families, business, community and government – to promote an environment that encourages healthy eating, regular physical activity and responsible individual choices."

Improving dietary practices and physical activity are at the core of the *Network's* efforts and are proven strategies for preventing many of the chronic diseases that account for more than

75 percent of medical costs in the United States. Physical inactivity, overweight and obesity are projected to cost California more than \$28 billion in 2005.

Almost a decade ago, the *Network* released the results of its first survey, the California Dietary Practices Survey, which analyzed the dietary practices of California adults between 1989 and 1997 and found that many did not consume the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables.

Recent data gathered from the California Dietary Practices Survey demonstrate that the *Network's* evidence-based programs are working. Data gathered between 1999 and 2003 show that food stamp nutrition interventions are positively associated with both increased fruit and vegetable consumption and increased physical activity among children from food stamp households. The interventions are also positively associated with increased fruit and vegetable consumption among low-income adults.

"The *Network* has made important strides in confronting poor nutrition and physical inactivity among California's low-income population," said Sandra Shewry, director of the California Department of Health Services. "We are building upon the impact and progress we've made so far, working to empower every Californian to live healthy and stay physically active."

A wide range of social, economic and environmental factors affect food and physical activity choices for low-income families and less-educated populations, making them more susceptible to obesity and overweight. To combat the scope and complexity of the problem, the *Network* employs a two-pronged approach: support nutrition education programs, such as the *California 5 a Day Campaign*, and engage *Network* partners to pursue community-level changes that improve access to fruits and vegetables, increase access to healthy foods in underserved communities and create safe places to engage in physical activity.

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has outlined a forward-reaching vision for a healthy California, a vision that challenges all Californians to make the state a national model for healthy living.

The Governor has initiated several statewide and national efforts to raise awareness about the obesity epidemic in California, including:

- Signing legislation to make the state's school nutrition standards the most progressive in the nation, extending the ban of sugary soft drinks in elementary and middle schools to high schools and investing more than \$18 million to put more fruits and vegetables into California schools.
- Providing \$40 million in his 2006-07 budget for incentive grants to hire more credentialed physical education teachers in elementary and middle schools and \$500 million in grants for schools to purchase physical education, arts and/or music equipment.
- Convening a Summit on Health, Nutrition and Obesity last September that brought together leaders and experts from the business, education, government and public health communities to address how individual groups can contribute toward reducing obesity in California. At the Summit, the Governor unveiled his bold vision for a healthy California. Also, businesses and community groups answered the Governor's challenge announced changes in business practices so Californians would have healthier options and more opportunities for physical activity.

Lastly, a key theme emerging from the Governor's Summit on Health Care Affordability held last month is that prevention and wellness are essential. A diverse array of state and national leaders in health care, business and advocacy who represent a wide spectrum of viewpoints on health care all agreed that to make health care more affordable, the state must focus more on wellness, prevention and early intervention.

Further improvements to improve access to fruits and vegetables are reflected in the United States Department of Agriculture's proposed changes to the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program's food package offered to low-income pregnant women and young children. Currently, the food package consists of eggs, milk, cheese, cereal, legumes and juice. New changes, scheduled to take effect next year, include adding fruits and vegetables and whole-grain products to the food packages for the first time.

The *Network* works with more than 300 different public, non-profit and business partners throughout the state to empower low-income Californians to consume the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables and enjoy physical activity every day. For more information, log on to the *Network's* Web site at [www.ca5aday.com](http://www.ca5aday.com).